

SHATTERING THE STIGMA

STUDENTS FIND WAYS TO COPE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

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One in five adults in the United States experience some type of mental illness in a given year, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). That's a lot of people, like 43.8 million of them.

At Augie there's an average class number of twenty people; following the "1 in 5" rule, there's probably about four people in every class on campus that struggle with some sort of mental illness.

Despite this, mental health is not something that is openly talked about in our society. Mental illness is something we should bring to light, rather than keeping it in the darkness simply to avoid discomfort.

By bringing attention to mental health, and therefore destroying the stigma that it is something people should hide, students on campus who struggle with mental illnesses will be able to focus their energy on finding coping mechanisms rather than trying to hide part of who they are.

Sydney Kelly, Cassi Lamb, and Sarah Stevens are students who openly struggle with mental health; they have each found ways to decrease the effect mental illness has on their day-to-day lives through painting, exercise, and music respectively.

Kelly said painting helps her because other people don't know what emotions go into each of her paintings, which often have hidden meaning behind the pretty pictures. "I've had people buy my paintings before," Kelly said, "and I'm just like 'you're hanging my shit on your wall. My awful shit looks really good on your kitchen wall.'"

Lamb and Stevens both agree that having something to focus all of your energy on is effective. "Getting lost in something and working hard on it, and then producing good results is a very positive experience," Stevens said about practicing a hard music passage.

Lamb said when focusing on exercising, it's hard to focus on anything else. "When my mind is going a million miles an hour, it helps to get my body to match up," Lamb added.

All three girls have seen the negative connotations our society has with mental illness, and stress that it is not something to be ashamed of, and definitely not something that should need to be hidden.